

PARK ACTIVITIES

**Park Museum/Museum Store:** Visitors may enjoy the wonderful park museum and store with quality pottery, jewelry and gifts. Hard-to-find books are also available. All proceeds benefit the park. For information, call (806) 488-2506.

**“Texas” Musical Drama:** “Texas” is performed in the Pioneer Theater during the summer. A steak dinner is served prior to the show, and visitors may enter the park without paying an entrance fee after 5 p.m. For more information or to purchase tickets, please call (806) 655-2181.

**Old West Stables:** Experience Palo Duro Canyon as the pioneers did, on horseback. Horse rides are available. The stables also feature souvenirs and a snack bar. You may reach the stables at (806) 488-2180.

**Palo Duro Trading Post:** Stop by for hot meals and cold drinks. Camping supplies, fuel and groceries are also available. The trading post also offers souvenirs. For information, call (806) 488-2821.

**Lone Star Interpretive Theater:** Park programs are presented throughout the year at the Lone Star Interpretive Theater (near the Hackberry Campground). Education tours may be reserved by calling (806) 488-2227, ext. 226.

For more information, visit  
www.tpwd.texas.gov/palodurocanyon  
or www.palodurocanyon.com



Life's better outside.®

Palo Duro Canyon State Park  
11450 Park Road 5  
Canyon, Texas 79015  
(806) 488-2227

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TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

INFORMATION GUIDE TO:  
PALO DURO  
CANYON  
S T A T E P A R K



Welcome to the “Grand Canyon of Texas.” Palo Duro Canyon State Park is a myriad of recreational opportunities, rich history and colorful geology. Visitors from all over the world have visited Texas’ second-largest park, which officially opened on July 4, 1934.

Palo Duro Canyon is 120 miles long and 800 feet deep, and is the second-largest canyon in the United States. The canyon was formed less than 1 million years ago when the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River first carved its way through the Southern High Plains. The rocks expose a geologic story which began approximately 250 million years ago. Some of the oldest rock layers in the canyon belong to the Quartermaster Formation. These rocks, which are located at the bottom of the canyon, are noted for their bright red claystone and white gypsum. Next, the Tecovas Formation can be seen with its yellow, gray and lavender mudstone. The sandstone and coarse gravel of the Trujillo Formation can be seen as you further ascend the canyon. The next layer of rocks are from the Ogallala Formation with sand, silt, clay and limestone.

HISTORY

Palo Duro Canyon has a rich history. Native American tribes in the area included Kiowa, Comanche and Cheyenne. In 1874, during the Red River Wars, Col. R.S. Mackenzie was sent into the area to move the Native Americans to Oklahoma. Col. Mackenzie and the 4th Cavalry were able to capture over 1,400 horses belonging to the tribes. Cut off from their transportation, the tribes later surrendered. In 1876, Charles Goodnight entered the canyon and opened the JA Ranch, which supported over 100,000 cattle.

PLANTS

Palo Duro is Spanish for hard wood in reference to the Rocky Mountain juniper trees found in the canyon. Other common tree species seen in the canyon include mesquite, cottonwood, salt cedar, willow, western soapberry and hackberry. Wildflower and grass species also dot the canyon walls and floor. Most commonly seen are Indian blanket, star thistle, sunflower, paperflower,

blackfoot daisy, tansy aster, sideoats grama, buffalograss, sage brush, yucca and prickly pear cactus.

WILDLIFE

Palo Duro Canyon has a wide variety of wildlife. Park visitors may encounter mule deer, roadrunners, wild turkey and cottontails. Other wildlife in the park includes coyotes, barbary sheep, bobcats and western diamond-back rattlesnakes. Bird-watching is a popular activity in the park. Painted buntings, canyon wrens and red-tailed hawks are a few of the many interesting birds living in the canyon. **PLEASE DO NOT FEED THE ANIMALS.**

PARK SAFETY

**Flash Flooding:** During rains, Palo Duro Canyon can flood over a short period of time. Please observe the following:

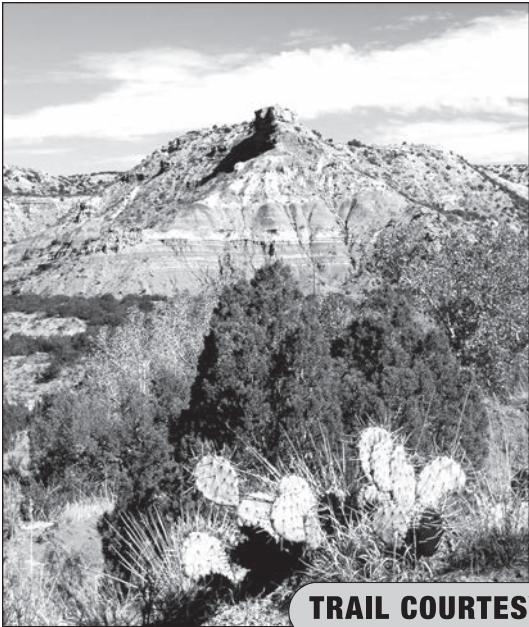
- Monitor the depth gauges at the water crossings. If the water exceeds six inches, DO NOT CROSS.
- Never try to cross flooded areas.
- Always monitor the local weather stations and heed staff warnings.
- Use common sense and never put yourself, family or friends in jeopardy.

**Fires:** Fires are permitted only in established fire rings and grills except during fire bans. Only gas fires are allowed during fire bans. **DO NOT COLLECT FIREWOOD.**

**Rough Terrain:** Most of the park is open for your enjoyment. However, please be careful of rough terrain, loose rocks and steep slopes. Be advised that you proceed at your own risk.

**Heat:** Summers may be extreme, and heat-related injuries are possible. **DRINK PLENTY OF WATER. USE CAUTION.**

**Park Regulations:** Firearms, illegal drugs and public consumption of alcoholic beverages is not allowed in the park. The collection of rocks, animals, plants and artifacts is strictly prohibited. Failure to abide by these and other park regulations may result in a fine, expulsion and arrest.



## TRAILS

### Trail Etiquette:

- Equestrians should only use trails designated for their use.
- Use caution and a slow speed when coming to a blind spot. Announce your presence.
- Remain on established trails.
- Carry out everything that you carry in.
- Do not collect rocks, animals, plants or artifacts.
- Respect trails through wise use and common courtesy.

**Givens, Spicer & Lowry Running Trail:** This trail is three miles from start (across from Hackberry Camp-ground) to the intersection of the Lighthouse Trail (plus 1.5 miles to the Lighthouse). The Little Fox Canyon Trail is a two-mile loop off of the main trail. This trail is moderately difficult with steep climbs and a total round trip distance of 11 miles. Horses a prohibited.

**Paseo Del Rio Trail:** This trail begins at water crossing #1 and traces the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River. It is a two-mile round trip hike with shade and an even path. This trail is considered easy and suitable for all levels. Horses prohibited.



**Equestrian Trail:** This trail starts at the turnaround area at the south end of the park. The trail heads south across the creek to the park boundary, then loops back west for a distance of four miles.

**Lighthouse Trail:** This trail leads to the Lighthouse (formation created by erosion) which is 310 feet high and has been designated a National Natural Landmark. This trail is considered moderate in difficulty with a total round trip distance of 5.75 miles and may have heavy traffic. Horses are allowed.

**Sunflower Trail:** This trail offers plenty of shade. A great view of satin spar gypsum is located 0.25 miles from the trailhead. This trail is two miles round-trip and is near water crossing #5. It is considered easy and suitable for all levels. Horses prohibited.

**Juniper Trails:** The trailhead is located near water crossing #6. The Riverside Trail is two miles round-trip and intersects the Sunflower Trail. Horses prohibited. The Cliffside Trail follows the road and intersects the Lighthouse Trail. It is six miles round-trip. Horses are allowed.

**Capitol Peak Mountain Bike Trail:** This trail is not suitable for foot traffic. The trailhead is located on Alternate Park Road 5 and is four miles round-trip.

**Rojo Grande Trail:** This trail is 2.5 miles round-trip and starts at the Lighthouse Trail parking lot. It connects with the Sunflower Trail and is shady and scenic. It is considered moderate in difficulty. Horses prohibited.

**CCC Trail:** The trailhead is located at the overlook parking lot. It descends to floor of canyon from rim, 1.75 miles. It is considered moderately difficult with steep areas and loose rock. No bikes allowed.

**Nature Trail:** This easy 0.5-mile trail is suitable for families with small children. It is the only loop trail in the park. The trailhead is located at the northeast corner of the Mack Dick Group Pavilion parking lot. No bikes.

**Rock Garden Trail:** This trail is across from the Sunflower Day Use Area. It is a difficult trail to rim of canyon. Beautiful scenery 2.38 to rim. Horses prohibited.

## WILDLIFE VIEWING AREA

**Viewing Blind:** Located behind the Palo Duro Trading Post. A short trail leads into the blind. A water feature and feeders attract birds. Great photo opportunities abound.

## EQUESTRIAN INFORMATION

### Riding Areas:

- Stay on designated trails.
- Lighthouse Trail: This is located past water crossing #2. Parallel park on the left side of the parking lot to unload your horses. There is a water hydrant on the left side of the parking lot.
- Equestrian Trail: This is located south of the turn-around. Pull through the double gates. You may unload near the corrals.
- Juniper Cliffside Trail: Unload in the equestrian area.

### Regulations:

- A current coggins test on each horse is required for entry into the park.
- Horses are allowed only in the established trail area, south and west of the paved road. This area is south and southeast of the traffic circle at the end of the Park Road and west of the Alternate Park Road 5. KEEP HORSES OFF PAVEMENT.
- Unloading horses is allowed only in the parking lot at the Lighthouse Trail and at the Equestrian Trail.
- Do not park on the road.
- Clean up all hay and horse litter.
- Horses may be tied to corrals, trailers or kept in horse trailers. Do not tie horses to trees or leave unattended.
- Night riding is not permitted.
- A water hydrant is available in the equestrian area.
- Racing horses is not permitted.
- Do not ride horses to rest rooms.
- If camping overnight, you must stay with your horse. A primitive camp area is available. First four reservations include a pen.

## OVERNIGHT RESERVATIONS

**Reservation Center:** (512) 389-8900, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed on major holidays. Voice mail available 24 hours a day.

**Internet Reservations:**  
[www.tpwd.texas.gov/reserve](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/reserve)

## FEES

### Entrance Fees:

Adult	\$5
Child (12 and under)	Free
School Events (with prior arrangements)	Free
Senior (Texas residents, 65 or older)	\$3
Veteran (with at least 60% disability)	Free
Groups of 15 or more	\$3

### Camping:

 (does not include entrance fees)

Electricity/Water-RV Hookup - 50 amp (max. 8 persons)	\$24
Electricity/Water-RV Hookup - 30 amp (max. 8 persons)	\$24
Primitive-Tent only (max. 8 persons)	\$12
Backpacking (max. 4 persons)	\$12
Equestrian (max. 4 persons)	\$12
Late Arrival Camping (max. 8 persons)	\$12

### Cabins:

 (does not include entrance fees, tax or \$50 cash or check deposit)

Sorenson* (max. 4 persons)	\$125
Lighthouse* (max. 4 persons)	\$110
Goodnight* (max. 4 persons)	
Cow Camp** (max. 4 persons)	\$60

\* Heated/air conditioned and fireplace. Indoor bathroom facilities/shower. Microwave, coffee-maker, outdoor grill, mini-refrigerator and picnic table. Linens, pillows and towels provided. Smoking is not permitted indoors. Pets are prohibited.

\*\* Heated/air conditioned and fireplace. Microwave and mini-refrigerator. Outdoor grill, picnic table and water. Full-size bunk bed. No linens or rest rooms. Smoking is not permitted indoors. Pets are prohibited.